

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

PORT ALBERNI PUBLIC HEARING DATED
9 JUNE 2004 AT HANSEN HALL

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE PRESENTATION TO THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON ELECTORAL REFORM. IT ATTEMPTS TO CAPTURE THE KEY ISSUES AND ARGUMENTS THAT WERE PRESENTED AND DISCUSSED DURING THE PUBLIC HEARING. IN SOME INSTANCES, THE PRESENTER HAS ALSO MADE A SUBMISSION TO THE ASSEMBLY AND THIS IS ACCESSIBLE VIA THE WEBSITE AT WWW.CITIZENSASSEMBLY.BC.CA BY CLICKING ON "GET INVOLVED". IF SUCH A SUBMISSION IS AVAILABLE, IT WILL BE NOTED AT THE END OF THIS REPORT.

Joyce Currie

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

Regional representation. Perhaps ten regions reflecting the geographic, resource, transportation, employment, delivery of services etc., challenges that are similar yet area specific throughout BC.

KEY THEMES

Joyce Currie spoke to the hearing about the importance of regional representation. She explained that the twenty eight regional boards do not have direct voice in the legislature but deal with a diverse range of regional issues. Ms Currie argued that there is an ongoing perception that regional representation under the current allocation of seats in the provincial legislature is not adequately responsive to electoral needs. She proposed a system to address the apparent disparity in our 'representation by population' First Past the Post single member electoral system as it relates to regional representation. Ms Currie recommended in that in addition to the current 79 seats, there be added as many regional seats as would be appropriate for the geography of BC. These additional seats would be elected using the Single Transferable Vote electoral system. She argued that regional seats would encourage the incumbent to become knowledgeable about the region. This would ensure that the additional representatives would be regionally accountable and advocate for the special issues affecting their region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Joyce Currie recommended introducing additional regional seats in the legislature, elected using the Single Transferable Vote electoral system.

Quote: "These regional seats would encourage the incumbent to become knowledgeable with issues unique to the geography and affected by that geography."

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

One member of the panel sought clarification on elements of the presentation.

Q	Now that you know that we can't add any extra seats, would you consider the STV system for the whole province?
A	Absolutely.

Comment from panel: "You might also like to look at our website where there are other submissions that are proposing STV."

“The problem is that with any electoral reform that includes an increase in the number of seats, especially if it goes to referendum, is that the debate becomes focused on having more politicians rather than the merits of the particular system. The Assembly has been restricted to 79 seats but there is some feeling that we could make an additional recommendation suggesting that the system would work better with more seats.”

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Following this presentation quite a few members of the audience had questions.

Q	I like the idea of regional representation, would Vancouver Island be one region?
A	No – if there were only ten additional seats then the regions would be bigger, so Vancouver Island wouldn't be big enough to be one region.
Q	I'm concerned about any system where we don't directly elect the representative. I want my representative to do things for me and Port Alberni.
A	I think we need to have someone who knows the region and who is responsive to the needs, for example, of a small town at the head of a large inlet.

Comment: There were no comments from the audience.

SUBMISSION: NO